

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NAIROBI 000327

SIPDIS

USAID FOR DCHA FOR WGARVELINK; USAID FOR DCHA/OFDA,  
GGOTTlieb MMARTY, IMCNAIRN,; USAID FOR AFR/EA, JBORNS;  
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [MASS](#) [PREL](#) [AMGT](#) [KE](#)

SUBJECT: NAIROBI BUILDING COLLAPSE: US ASSISTANCE UNDERWAY

1. SUMMARY: A four-story building under construction in central Nairobi collapsed mid-day January 23, injuring 105, and killing 20, with an unknown number unaccounted for, according to on-site press reports as of January 24 afternoon. Responding to the Kenyan government's request for assistance, Post immediately facilitated the deployment of 16 Seabees who arrived on-site by 7:00 a.m January 24, procured a donation of excavation equipment, supplied drinking water and light equipment, and has management and medical officers on site to coordinate ongoing assistance. As the situation develops, Post's specially convened emergency task force will continue to support the rescue and recovery efforts, as well as coordinate with British and Israeli teams. END SUMMARY.

#### SUDDEN COLLAPSE

2. A four-story building under construction in central Nairobi collapsed without warning mid-day January 23. January 24 on-site media report 20 deaths and 105 injured, with 5 known survivors trapped in the rubble and an unknown number unaccounted for. According to a January 23 government statement, there were at least 8 confirmed dead and 104 seriously injured. Kenyan rescue workers and the Kenyan Red Cross were on the scene immediately. In its statement, the Kenyan government appealed for blood donations and oxygen to sustain those trapped, and announced that President Kibaki, in Khartoum for the African Union Summit, would curtail his trip to return to Nairobi. Kenya has appointed an Army Major General to oversee rescue operations and established an information center dedicated to the emergency. The government noted January 23 that the United States had sent "international rescue experts" to assist. Early media reports suggest the construction had not been in compliance with regulations, which may have precipitated the disaster. According to The Nation, an employee of the Central Bank of Kenya sent a letter on December 15 to the editor of the same paper warning that the building was weak and susceptible to collapse due to inadequate building materials and hasty construction.

#### POST RESPONSE

3. Post received separate requests from the Kenyan police and the Government's National Disaster Operations Center January 23, for search and rescue assistance. CJTF-HOA, in coordination with KUSLO, responded immediately sending 16 Seabees who arrived at the scene early morning January 24. The DCM also convened an emergency meeting to discuss further assistance and relief.

4. In addition to the 20 Seabees providing consultation and search and rescue services, Post has delivered bottled water to the Red Cross, a water tanker truck to alleviate the heavy dust that is impairing operations, and has secured donation of a crane, two dump trucks, jackhammers, lights and a front-end loader from Post contract construction company. Post is also responding to the government's request for small oxygen tanks. Post Management Section coordinated the delivery of additional water, generators, lights and light excavation equipment. Responding to press inquiries, Post has a Public Affairs staff member at the scene. Post is submitting a separate request for funding to USAID's Office of Disaster Assistance (OFDA) to provide relief as well as support Post assistance. On January 24, the Office of the President and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government officials recognized the United States' rapid response, noting their appreciation for Post assistance.

#### INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION

5. Other Nairobi diplomatic missions are also supporting rescue efforts. A team of 140 Israeli military personnel with technical equipment and dogs arrived late morning on January 24. Two teams of British search and rescue experts with infrared imagers and seismic sensors are scheduled to be in Kenya by the evening of January 24. The UK High Commission also has two structural engineers on site to consult on debris removal, and has appointed a liaison

officer with whom Post is coordinating. The German government is also considering sending help, possibly to include sniffer dogs.

16. As the situation develops, Post will continue to closely monitor all aspects of the disaster and respond accordingly. Post will also coordinate with other diplomatic missions to maximize the benefits of our assistance and avoid redundancy. Further updates to follow septel.

BELLAMY